

Region 5: Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission

DRAFT

Introduction to the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Region (PDC 5)

The Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission provides planning and technical support to its members. Member jurisdictions include the counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, and Roanoke; the cities of Covington, Roanoke and Salem; and the towns of Iron Gate, Fincastle, Troutville, Buchanan, New Castle and Vinton. Since the 2002 VOP, there have been changes to the membership of PDC 5. Clifton Forge, which was previously a city, changed status and is included with Covington for statistical information. The other change is that Franklin County has become a member of PDC 5, while maintaining its membership with PDC 12. For the purposes of this Plan, all of the statistical information for Franklin County is included in the PDC 12 chapter.

Stretching from the Blue Ridge Mountains across the Shenandoah Valley to the ridge and valley section of the Appalachian Mountains, PDC is a mixture of urban centers and rural farms and forests. Suburban sprawl is widespread throughout the region, adding more pressures to public services. Though its growth rate is relatively small, most of the area is feeling the pressure of suburban sprawl. Marked by topographic variety, numerous rivers, streams, and many notable cultural and historic sites, the area offers a full range of historic and outdoor experiences. Whether hiking the Appalachian Trail or driving the Blue Ridge Parkway, exploring the forests George Washington and Jefferson National Forest or paddling the James River, the outdoor enthusiast's choices of activities are many.

The Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP), with its millions of visitors annually, is a cornerstone for state and regional tourism and development of economic initiatives. Regional and local open space, recreational and educational programs reflect and rely upon the quality of the BRP experience. There is a need to develop appropriate and acceptable protection techniques for property adjacent to the BRP and other recreational resources in the region.

The region's growth rate has slowed in the last several years to a moderate rate. The projected growth rate between 2000 and 2005 is 1.5%. Future growth is anticipated to be steady, with the population in the region projected to increase 5.4% to 278,800 in 2020 from its 2000 population level of 264,541. All of the localities will be gaining in population, except for Alleghany County, which is expected to reduce population rate of 7%. PDC 5 has some diversity in its population. However, the projected increase in minorities is less than the state overall.

Demand/survey findings

Based on the findings of the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey* (VOS), the top ten most popular outdoor activities in the region are walking for pleasure, swimming, driving for pleasure, jogging/running, fresh water fishing, hunting, using a playground, visiting natural areas, sunbathing and beach use, and use of game fields. In contrast to the state findings that access to recreational waters, only three of the top ranking activities in PDC 5 are water related--swimming, sunbathing and beach use, and fishing. The second most needed facilities identified are trails close to home, including walking, jogging and running. A unique aspect of PDC 5 is that the participation rates for hunting have actually increased, compared to the drop statewide. The other significant change in participation was over a dramatic drop in participation in sailing; other lake and stream activities also dropped from the 2002 VOS.

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The Demand, Supply and Needs Analysis, **Table ----¹**, compares the existing supply of outdoor recreation facilities in the region with the demand measured by the 2006 Virginia Outdoors Survey and computes need. The needs are then projected out to the year 2020 using population projections. Activity days for many of the activities have dropped since the 2002 VOS leaving an excess supply of facilities for many of the activities, especially, hunting acres, hiking/ backpacking trails and horseback riding trails. Areas where there are still unmet recreational facility needs are: campsites, fitness trails, soccer fields, nature study and programs, volleyball courts, sunbathing opportunities, and swimming opportunities, especially for outdoor swimming areas.

Specific needs identified in the Northern Virginia region are:

- Water access for fishing, swimming and jet skiing.
- Trails for fitness and off-road motorcycling
- Multipurpose fields for soccer, football, and other field sports
- Public lands for camping

OUTDOORS RECREATION

The following are general recommendations for meeting the outdoor recreation needs of the region:

- Within the Roanoke-Salem MPO the state and regional agencies should place a high priority on providing recreation opportunities to the Commonwealth's urban population in "close-to home" settings to allow for better access and to avoid overuse of facilities planned for rural populations.
- Local agencies in partnership with state and federal agencies should ensure that adequate supplies of recreation and open space are provided to meet demand and that those areas and facilities are adequately staffed, funded, and maintained. A dedicated funding source for the acquisition, management, and maintenance of recreation areas and facilities should be considered a priority.
- Activity user groups along with local parks and recreation departments should continue to educate outdoor recreation enthusiasts to be cognizant of the impacts they have on others to minimize user conflicts and increase economic and natural resource sustainability.
- Local, state and federal government should provide the appropriate number and venue of opportunities for the Commonwealth's population to enjoy and access outdoor environments.
- State and local DCR and local parks and recreation departments should provide opportunities to learn responsible use of public lands through the teaching of *Leave No Trace* and *Tread Lightly!* Skills.
- DCR and other natural resource agencies should provide leadership and example in operations and maintenance on behalf of conservation and outdoor ethics.
- Property owners should promote management techniques that promote safe outdoor recreation environments.
- Communities and land managers should put forth a united front against crime, by partnering with local law enforcement.

LAND CONSERVATION LANDS

The land conservation map for the region includes existing conservation land in the following categories.

- State/Federal conservation lands: split by state and federal management agencies
- Local open space lands
- Conservation easements

¹ Sections highlighted in blue need to be updated.

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- Designated historic districts and eligible historic districts

The acreages for each land conservation category are shown on the map. Future land conservation needs and direction should relate to the remaining resources that warrant protection for water quality, habitat, quality of life and economic viability of the area. Many organizations work together with localities and the region to provide an array of land conservation mechanisms. (See Chapter III) Currently, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation holds 1,799 acres in easements to protect the scenic quality of the region.

[Begin Textbox

Land Trusts Operating in the PDC

- James River Association
- Valley Conservation Council
- Western Virginia Land Trust
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Piedmont Environmental Council

End Textbox]

General recommendations for land conservation include:

- All localities should continue to promote the conservation and preservation of open space through land acquisition, conservation easements, stewardship agreements, the development of agricultural and forestal districts, the outright purchase of land or any of the many open space protection strategies presented in chapter III. Land Conservation.
- As population growth accelerates development pressure, land conservation and sound land use decision-making must become prominent considerations in all land-planning efforts. Localities, state agencies, and private organizations must make deliberate decisions about how to focus and prioritize their land conservation efforts. To do so, they must develop a method of targeting conservation efforts, using green infrastructure land planning techniques, geographic information systems, local comprehensive plans, and decision support systems such as the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment.
- Protection of the west side of the Blue Ridge Mountains.
- Meeting conservation goals will require partnerships among all agencies.
- Land conservation projects should offer a wide range of public benefits including water quality protection, habitat preservation and public access.

Specific recommendations for land conservation include:

- 1) Protection of the **Buchanan/Purgatory Mountain**.
- 2) Protection of **Poor Mountain**.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are regional recommendations for implementation of green infrastructure planning presented in Chapter IV.

- Local governments should take the lead in securing green infrastructure through planning tools.

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- Regional and local governments should adopt and implement the green infrastructure-planning model to ensure sustainable development of their community and a high quality of life for future generations.
- Local and regional agencies and conservation organizations should receive information and education about green infrastructure planning including guidance on local zoning initiatives that lead to changes in community design and transportation systems.
- Sources of funding for local government green infrastructure initiatives should be identified and sought.

PROGRAMS

The programs listed in this subsection outline recommendations related to statewide initiatives for outdoor recreation and conservation. The program areas include: Trails and Greenways, Blueways and Water Access, Historic and Landscape Resources, Scenic Resources, Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways, Scenic Rivers, Watersheds and Environmental and Land Stewardship Education.

Trails & Greenways

Trail and greenway planning initiated at the local and regional level is important for the future development of an infrastructure that promotes public health. Only a handful of local governments have a formally adopted trails plan. With only a small percentage of existing plans approved and integrated into the locality's comprehensive plan, there is a risk that development will continue to occur without consideration for people who want to integrate exercise into their daily routine by walking, jogging or cycling to points of interest. Each locality should develop a trail and greenway plan, bicycle and pedestrian plan, and/or green infrastructure plan incorporating trails that will be adopted as a formal component of the comprehensive plan. In the plan, an effort should be made to link existing and proposed public lands and other resources valued by the community with businesses and neighborhoods.

- Local governments should have a greenways and trails component in their comprehensive plan that provides for a variety of leisure trail experiences and promotes pedestrian and bicycle transportation alternatives.
- State, regional and local governments should include funds for trail development, management and maintenance in annual capital and operating budgets, and seek creative ways to provide incentive funding for trail development.
- State, regional and local governments should strengthen the public's understanding of the connection between trails and public health and establish policies that support pedestrian and bicycle facilities in road construction and development/redevelopment projects.
- DCR should partner with Planning District Commissions to a) facilitate communications between trail providers, users, and policy makers, b) encourage the private sector to improve regional and statewide trail opportunities and support and c) focus on regional trail networks to establish a trunkline statewide trail system.
- Local and regional trail managers should provide information about their trail at trailheads, in brochures and on Web sites so that users can choose sections within their skill and capability levels.
- Update, adopt and implement the **Roanoke Valley Greenway Plan**.
- Localities and public landowners need to cooperate to provide adequate parking at trailheads.
- Develop more trails that are multi-use.

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Trunkline trails are statewide corridors connecting urban, suburban and rural areas of Virginia. Plans to establish routes and connect with other local and regional trails are important to the success of these major trails. Local, regional and state planners should work together to mediate issues that arise when trails cross-jurisdictional boundaries, to provide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure (including signage and amenities) and to get information out to the public. Trunkline trails existing or underway in Virginia include:

- The Great Eastern Trail will link existing trails from central Alabama to central New York along the Allegheny Highlands. The Southeast Foot Trails Coalition and the Mid Atlantic Foot Trail Coalition are undertaking this project, which is being sponsored by the American Hiking Society.
- The Appalachian Trail is an existing National Scenic Trail. Because of this special designation, localities that host the Appalachian Trail should be cognizant of protecting viewsheds from existing overlooks and other scenic values of the corridor. For more than 75 years the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and its member clubs have worked voluntarily with federal, state and local governments, as well as numerous individual landowners, to solve problems associated with the acquisition, development, administration, management and maintenance of the trail.
- Blue Ridge Parkway shall continue working with Roanoke Valley Greenways Commission, City of Roanoke and local partners to connect Parkway trails with regional greenway system.

Specific trail recommendations

- 3) **Roanoke River Greenway** and Canoe Trail should be constructed along the Roanoke River from Spring Hollow to Explore Park and other important open space corridors to connect existing recreation and park facilities. Planned flood reduction and water/sewer programs could provide an opportunity to address trail and other open space needs, and the development of a river center would provide educational opportunities and access to the river for all citizens of the metropolitan region. The greenway along the Roanoke River should be enhanced wherever possible to include additional recreational and environmental education opportunities for the citizens of this predominantly urban area. Green Hill Park includes one of these trail sections.
- 4) Support the **Roanoke Valley Area** Metropolitan Planning Organization's approved **Urban Area Bikeway Plan** and work to have the Rural Bikeway Plan adopted.
- 5) Support Development of the **Alleghany Scenic Trail** from Lake Moomaw to Clearwater Park.
- 6) Support development of equestrian trails in the region; including the **Alleghany Highlands Horse Trail**, a 45-mile system connecting trails in George Washington National Forest in Alleghany and Bath Counties with trails in Douthat State Park. Develop an **equestrian loop trail** that will continue to utilize the USFS Fenwick Mines Recreation Area trailhead, the C&O right of way and other USFS lands, connecting to the Craig Creek Campground.
- 7) Develop **Lick Run Greenway** connecting Valley View Mall to the Civic Center and Rail Station in downtown Roanoke.
- 8) Continue efforts to secure easements for public access along the **Craig Valley Scenic Trail, a C&O rails to trails project** connecting New Castle in Craig County to Eagle Rock in Botetourt County.
- 9) Implement the **greenway network** plan to include the following trail segments: Hanging Rock Battlefield Trail extended to Roanoke River, Tinker Creek Greenway to Carvin's Cove, Wolf Creek Greenway with consideration to Blue Ridge Parkway and Roanoke River, Glade Creek to Tinker Creek to Vineyard Park and the parkway, Mill Mountain Greenway, Lick Run and Tinker Trail.
- 10) Extend the **Roanoke River Greenway** along the North Fork of the Roanoke River to Blacksburg.

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11) The proposed **Alleghany Trail** traverses the Craig County/West Virginia line, cutting across the southwest corner of Alleghany County before entering West Virginia. Portions of the trail have been constructed, and it is nearly complete in West Virginia. The trail will connect to the Appalachian Trail².

12) Continue to develop portions of the abandoned **C&O Line** between Clifton Forge and Charlottesville, as a greenway for hiking and equestrian use.

13) The Blue Ridge Parkway and George Washington and Jefferson National Forests staff should continue working with horse enthusiasts and regional government units to complete the **equestrian trail between Roanoke and Lexington Equestrian Trail**. The trail will connect the equine center near Lexington with trail resources in the national forests. Completion of the trail should be undertaken to provide a venue for national events, as well as regional and state needs. Equestrian trail connections should be considered from the proposed Roanoke to Lexington Equestrian Trail to Carvin's Cove, Green Hill Park, Spring Hollow Reservoir and the Explore Park to Carvin's Cove.

14) **Jackson River Greenway** should be considered from Iron Gate to upstream of the Westvaco facility in Covington.

15) A greenway should be developed along the 48-mile long **Valley Rail-Tinker Trail** connecting the Hollins University area of Roanoke County to Lexington, Virginia. Portions of the property will be donated in fee simple to the Western Virginia Land Trust.

16) Develop a trail system that ties the **Fort Young Park to the Jackson River Park** in South Covington and the downtown (Main Street) area of Covington. It could be extended to Warm Springs using the scenic railway.

17) Develop the **Vinton Business Center Trail**, which will provide a link to the BRP and Explore Park.

18) Develop the **Perimeter Greenway Trail**.

19) Continue to develop trails around **Cove Reservoir** and connect it to the Appalachian Trail.

Blueways & Water Access

Access to Virginia's rivers and streams is necessary for meeting water-related recreational demands. Additional attention needs to be given for all aspects of water use and access. Access considerations for the region include the following:

Water Trail Recommendations

- The navigable rivers of the state should be managed as water trails. Public access areas and support facilities should be developed at appropriate intervals along these rivers.
- Regional and local governments should work with state agencies to market water trails through brochures, maps, signage and the media.
- Local jurisdictions should encourage both private and public landowners to operate rest stops and boat-in-only campgrounds along water trails at suitable site locations along Virginia rivers and streams.
- Areas that have adequate access and recreational seasonal flow levels should develop water trails.

20) **Roanoke River Greenway and Canoe Trail** should be considered along the Roanoke River from Spring Hollow to Explore Park

21) Implement development of the **Jackson River Scenic Trail** as a greenway/blueway of 17-mile length from Alleghany County to Lake Moomaw and extending into Highland County.

² Sections highlighted in yellow need to be updated from the 2002 VOP.

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Water Access Recommendations

- Identify and increase water access opportunities to Virginia's rivers.
- Develop and upgrade public accesses and boat ramps along the rivers.
- Whenever bridge are to be built to replaces consideration needs to be given for parking, boat ramps and bank fishing access along rivers and lakes.

Specific water access recommendations for the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Region include:

- 22) The Forest Service and Virginia's Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should cooperate to finalize and implement plans to acquire and develop a series of boating and fishing access sites and canoe campsites along the **James River**. Additional public water access is needed on the river between Eagle Rock and Snowden, and between Lynchburg and Bent Creek.
- 23) Public water access is needed on **Johns Creek** above New Castle.
- 24) Public water access is needed on **Craig Creek** between New Castle and Strom.
- 25) Water-based recreational facilities and expanded access opportunities should be considered for **Lake Moomaw** and **Jackson River** in Alleghany County. Where appropriate, portages should be created around dams and other river obstacles.
- 26) Provide a better portage at the **Niagara Dam** on the Roanoke (Staunton) River, or remove the dam.
- 27) Enhance boating access on the **Roanoke River**. Enhance the access for motorized and non-motorized boating on the Roanoke River and expand recreational facilities and public access opportunities while designing and constructing the proposed River Flood Reduction Project. Where appropriate, portages should be created around dams other river obstacles.
- 28) As the James River is a part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, a **James River Canoe Trail** should be considered for development beginning in Iron Gate and running the full length of the river to its terminus in the bay.
- 29) Develop a public boat landing at the **Craig County Youth & Recreation Association property** at Rte. 615 and 614.
- 30) Improve existing boat ramps along the **James River** and add additional ones to meet demands.

Historic and Landscape Resources

The history of the Roanoke Valley – Alleghany region is a long and proud one. The vestiges of it are evident in the downtowns and throughout the countryside. Once the hub of travel and commerce, Roanoke is reestablishing itself as a destination point based on its rich history. Whether one looks to the historic agrarian landscape, the industrial centers, or developed historic sites, the protection of these critical sites is critical to the economic vitality of the region.

General recommendations for the preservation of historic sites and landscapes in the region include:

- Each locality in the region should make every effort to identify historic and archaeological resources within each jurisdiction that can be used for economic, tourism, recreational and educational benefits, and should include those resources in all local land use planning and decision-making processes to promote preservation and protection of these resources.
- Local historic attractions, historical societies, museums and other tourism organizations in the region should build partnerships with the Virginia Association of Museums, Virginia Civil War Trails, the Association for

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the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities/Preservation Virginia, the Virginia Main Street Program and others to enhance local heritage tourism, educational and recreational offerings.

- Local governments and private organizations owning historic properties in the region should be encouraged to manage those properties effectively for long-term protection of the public trust and to maximize public benefit consistent with the nature of the historic property.
- DCR and local governments should extend the **Hunter's Raid Civil War Trail** from the existing section in Botetourt County to Craig County.

Scenic Resources

Though often considered only as historic landscapes, scenic resources are identified more broadly to cover natural and cultural landscapes as well. Scenic resources highlight ecologically healthy landscapes and well-managed lands. A more in depth discussion of scenic resources is found in [Chapter ____](#).

General Scenic Resources recommendations include:

- Each locality should conduct a visual resources assessment as part of their green infrastructure inventory and mapping process. Consider using universities and other institutions to help supplement and support this effort.
- Localities should ensure that a component of their comprehensive plan provides for the protection and enhancement of scenic resources, visual character and viewsheds.
- Localities should develop corridor management plans for scenic byways, blueways, and greenways to assure preservation of the scenic quality of the corridor.
- Consideration should be given by local governments to develop ridgeline ordinances that would preserve open space and protect recreational lands.
- Management of Virginia's scenic resources is linked to economic prosperity of the state as it relates to tourism and the overall aesthetic character of the Commonwealth for business, industry and residents.

Specific Scenic Resources recommendations include:

- 31) Implement protection of viewsheds identified in the study by the National Park Service of the **Blue Ridge Parkway**.
- 32) The Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club should continue to work with localities to protect the viewsheds along the **Appalachian Trail** and its side-trail connections.
- 33) Protect the scenic aspects of **Interstate 81**, as it is recognized by the American Automobile Association and other groups as a scenic highway, which acts as an attractive gateway to the state.
- 34) Protect the top of **Read Mountain**.

Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways

Scenic roads provide leisure time experiences and connect travelers to various scenic, historic, cultural and recreational sites. Since driving for pleasure and visiting historic sites are in the top three recreational activities, these resources become a critical link for communities. The preservation of their inherent qualities is critical to of attractive and welcoming communities. Many scenic road corridors have been changing as forests and farmsteads are converted into more developed land uses. Designation of these roads, through the Virginia Byway Program, provides opportunities for promotion and protection. For the first time in Virginia's history, four roads received national designation in 2005. The Blue Ridge Parkway (Blue Ridge Parkway) in PDC 5 was given the highest designation as an All-American Road. The America's Byway Program enables the localities to focus on enhancing the traveling and visitor experience and managing, restoring and preserving

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scenic or historic roads and allows the locality to apply for funding through the National Scenic Byways Grant Program.

Many collaborative efforts have used scenic roads to tell a significant story of our history and natural resources. These thematic trails are further discussed in the Scenic Byways subsection of Chapter VII.

Following are general recommendations for scenic roads:

- Local governments should partner with other state, local and professional organizations to determine implementation strategies to protect the scenic assets of byway corridors.
- The DGIF should continue to work with regional and local governments and other organizations to encourage additional marketing and enhancements to Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail sites. Ecotourism is an important component in promoting natural resource conservation.
- Local jurisdictions should recognize and nominate scenic roads for designation as Virginia Byways. Designation of these roads, through the Virginia Byway Program, provides opportunities for promotion and protection.
- Preserve the inherent qualities of scenic road corridors as attractive and welcoming communities.
- A **James River Byway** should be developed consisting of roads that closely parallel the James River Bateau Festival route.

35) **Blue Ridge Parkway** - The diverse history and culture of the southern Appalachian Mountains is showcased along the Blue Ridge Parkway. Protection of the scenic viewsheds and natural, historical and cultural resources for the Blue Ridge Parkway corridor is critical to the continue beauty and uniqueness of these corridors and their environs. Increasing encroachment has a major impact on the quality of the visitor's recreational experience. Develop comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances to ensure that the intrinsic value of the parkway and its viewsheds are conserved.

36) Protect viewsheds of the USFS **Highlands Scenic Tour**.

Specific roads to be studied are recommended for inclusion into the Virginia Byway Program:

37) **Route 220** in Alleghany County from Covington to the Bath County/Alleghany County line and in Botetourt County from Clifton Forge to Route 615.

38) **Route 269** from Clifton Forge to and including 780.

39) **Route 606** Botetourt and Craig counties from Fincastle to the intersection with Route 615.

40) Designate the historic Valley Road, **Route 11**, as a Virginia Scenic Byway.

Scenic Rivers

An ever-increasing awareness of Virginia's Scenic Rivers is a direct result of concerns for water quality, biodiversity, scenic landscapes, and water quantity. River resources are a critical component for natural resource and community planning. In PDC 5 has one designated scenic river segment, which is a portion of the James River. In order to more successfully protect river resources the following general and specific recommendations are given.

- Local government should nominate candidate streams and rivers for study and possible Scenic River designation.
- DCR should assist local governments with development of planning tools (e.g. training, land-use overlays, corridor management plans) that will afford special recognition and protection to Virginia's Scenic Rivers.
- The Forest Service has undertaken an assessment of the rivers in the George Washington / Jefferson National Forest to determine whether any are eligible for national recognition as Wild, Scenic or Recreation rivers.

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The following river segments are recommended for evaluation to determine suitability for inclusion into the Virginia Scenic River Program:

- 41) Additional sections of the **James River** from Springwood to the Botetourt County/ Rockbridge County line.
- 42) **Craig Creek** in Craig County from the Montgomery County/Craig County line to the Town of New Castle and Botetourt Counties.
- 43) **Johns Creek** in Craig County from Craig Springs to New Castle.
- 44) The **Roanoke River** beginning in Montgomery County from the Camp Altamons area to Smith Mountain Lake.

Watershed Resources

PDC 5 is on the continental divide between the New River watershed, which flows to the Mississippi River, and the James River watershed, which flows to the Chesapeake Bay. This unique position puts the PDC in a unique position to set an example and influence downstream management. (A List of local watershed groups will be included in a later draft)

General watershed recommendation:

- Regional and local governments should protect the management of watersheds by integrating watershed management planning with local land use ordinances and comprehensive plans.
- 45) Protect **Johns Creek** in Craig County from Craig Springs to New Castle.
 - 46) Protect the headwaters of the **Roanoke River**.

Environmental and Land Stewardship Education Recommendations

Outdoors Environmental Education needs are being assessed for each region. The information about potential outdoor education facility needs will be identified in a later draft.

- Federal, state, regional, and local agencies will provide citizens access to stewardship education and conservation resources.
- Federal, state, regional, and local agencies will promote the value and benefits of outdoor experiences and their relationship to environmentally literate citizenry.

Specific Environmental and Land Stewardship Education Recommendations:

- 47) **Mill Mountain Discovery Center:** The center offers educational programs that focus on Mill Mountain's geology, wild flora and fauna, cultural history and past and present recreational opportunities. Programs, camps and special events are offered focusing on outdoor educational and cultural awareness. The center also serves as a small visitor center for travelers and city residents to learn more about the Roanoke Valley region. Finally, the center serves as a meeting place and reception site when the facility is not open to the public.
- 48) **Roanoke River Center:** The center will provide environmental education programs focusing on the Roanoke River and its riparian habitat. Conservation, aquatic ecology appreciation, pollution control, wildlife habitat, greenway development, and recreational opportunities are the core activities. The facility will offer numerous programs, camps, lectures, special events and classes for students and citizens of the region through on-site exhibits and outreach activities. The center will also serve as a meeting and reception site when the facility is not open to the public.
- 49) **Outdoor education:** The Roanoke City Parks and Recreation Department offers outdoor educational programs for schools, citizens, community groups, and organizations. These programs feature environmental education activities that promote the responsible use of our natural resources. These programs also offer

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alternative outdoor educational opportunities that promote self-confidence, coordination, and an appreciation of the natural world around us. These activities are held at the Mill Mountain Discovery Center, the Roanoke River Center, Rocwood Indoor Adventure Center and in other natural areas around the region.

FEDERAL FACILITIES

National Parks (NPS) Recommendations

General and specific recommendations for NPS facilities include:

- Continue to develop multi-modal connections to NPS sites, as a component of an interconnected, statewide system of trails and greenways.
- Work with state agencies to elevate scenic viewshed protection, and heritage preservation initiatives. Utilizes partnerships to identify, prioritize, and develop strategies to protect critical resources.
- **Blue Ridge Parkway** shall continue working with Roanoke Valley Greenways Commission, City of Roanoke and local partners to connect Parkway trails with regional greenway system. Local governments also need to support efforts to encourage adjacent landowners, localities, and planning district commissions to develop a scenic overlay zone adjacent to and within the viewshed of the Blue Ridge Parkway as part of a multi-regional Parkway viewshed planning process.

National Forests (USFS) Recommendations

The U. S. Forest Service should:

- Continue to develop new partnerships to market recreational opportunities and rural economic development through tourism; work with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia's Blue Ridge Highlands Tourism, Inc., Shenandoah Valley Tourism Association, and the Virginia Tourism Corporation to develop regional and international marketing strategies to showcase Virginia's outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Continue to place program emphasis on areas designated by Congress such as the **Appalachian National Scenic Trail**, Mount Pleasant Scenic Area, and wilderness areas.
- The **George Washington and Jefferson National Forest** should continue to partner with the **Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau** and other area chambers of commerce to encourage tourism in this area.

50) Localities should collaborate with USFS to protect the corridor and viewsheds of the **USFS Highland Scenic Road**.

National Wildlife Refuges & Fish Hatcheries Recommendations

The USFWS will coordinate and implement the following recommendations with regard to outdoor recreation and the NWRs.

STATE FACILITIES

State Parks

(Complete recommendations not available at this time)

51) Encourage and support proposed enhancements at **Douthat State Park**, including increasing the number of cabins. Promote and advertise the park by working with the Western Highlands Travel Council, the Roanoke Convention, and Visitor's Bureau.

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State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas Recommendations

- The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should continue to develop trail systems within wildlife management areas to facilitate access for nature study, birdwatching, hunting and fishing.
- The DGIF should continue to investigate opportunities to acquire in-holdings in their WMA's and to improve each area with trails and other structures for wildlife viewing and other outdoor recreation. They should also acquire additional lands wherever feasible to provide additional access for public hunting, fishing and other wildlife viewing recreation.

Specific WMA recommendations

- Provide opportunities to connect to other natural areas and for appreciation of natural communities within **Havens WMA**.

State Forests Recommendations

- DOF will coordinate with, and seek the assistance of, local trail and river user organizations to develop forest trails and publish maps for each state forest as well as establish greenways and blueways for public use.
- Localities should work with DOF to stress the importance of the urban canopy and help localities set goals.
- Localities should work with DOF to demonstrate the importance of a healthy urban tree canopy and develop strategies to enhance the urban forest.

Natural Areas

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Natural Areas

Natural area preserves within the district are Johnsons Creek in Alleghany County and Poor Mountain in Roanoke County.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation has, as of November 2006, documented 415 occurrences of 125 rare species and natural communities in the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Region. Sixty-one species are globally rare and six are federally threatened or endangered. One hundred twenty-seven conservation sites have been identified in the district; 90 (71%) have received some level of protection through ownership or management by state, federal and non-government organizations. However, only XX sites are protected well enough to ensure the long-term viability of the rare species and natural communities they support.

DCR recommends that all unprotected conservation sites, and all unprotected portions of partially protected sites, be targeted for future land conservation efforts. The appropriate method of protection will vary with each site but may include: placing the site on Virginia's Registry of Natural Areas, developing a voluntary management agreement with the landowner, securing a conservation easement through a local land trust, acquiring the site through a locality or local land trust, dedicating the site as a natural area preserve with the current owner, or acquiring the site as a state-owned natural area preserve. Within the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Region, DCR is particularly interested in protecting:

- Water quality for globally rare aquatic communities
- Significant caves and karst areas
- Significant shale barren communities

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- Significant wetlands in Floyd County
- Additional lands around Poor Mountain Natural Area Preserve
- Significant terrestrial communities within the city of Roanoke's municipal watershed areas

Information about the location of conservation sites and the natural heritage resources they contain, as well as management assistance, is available to local planners from DCR's Natural Heritage staff. For a discussion of the Natural Heritage Program, see [Chapter xxx](#).

- 52) Protect additional lands around **Poor Mountain Natural Area Preserve** and complete implementation of access and trails.
- 53) Protect additional lands around **Johnson Creek Natural Area Preserve** and complete implementation of access and trails.
- 54)
- 55) Work with **City of Roanoke** to ensure protection of significant terrestrial communities within municipal watershed areas.
- 56) Continue the cooperative riparian restoration program at **Garst Mill Park**.

Transportation

Virginia is home to more of the United States Numbered Bicycle Route system than any other state, since both USBR 1 and USBR 76 cross the state. USBR 76, the Trans-American Bike Route, crosses east-west from Yorktown to the Kentucky border in Dickenson County through PDC 5. This federal route is officially recognized by AASHTO, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. These routes are shown on VDOT's official County Maps, and signed in the field.

Transportation is integral to conservation and outdoor recreation. General recommendations relating to transportation for the region include:

- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on providing alternatives to the use of private automobiles for daily activities. Transit systems, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, improved community design, as well as a change in people's attitudes toward transportation alternatives will be needed for the transportation system of the future to meet capacity needs and energy constraints. (www.vtrans.org)
- Priority should be given to eliminating potential transportation barriers for the public, and improving the linkages of recreation areas across major transportation corridors.
- Local governments should encourage the development of a permanent process for integrating the recommendations of local public health agencies and active living into all phases of land use planning.
- Support the Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's approved Urban Area Bikeway Plan and work to have the Rural Bikeway Plan adopted.

- 57) Interstate Bike Route 76, Trans-American Bike Route, should be enhanced and properly identified.

Other State Facilities

The following state-owned properties contain undeveloped land that may have potential for recreational use. Each site should be evaluated and assessed for recreation viability. Cooperative use agreements should be developed where appropriate.

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58) Dabney Lancaster Community College in Alleghany County near Clifton Forge has some acres of undeveloped land that may have potential for recreational use. The site should be assessed and cooperative use agreements developed if appropriate.

Local Parks and Recreation Departments

Twenty-seven of the ninety-six Virginia counties do not have full time Parks and Recreation Departments, meaning they do not employ a full-time parks and recreation director. In PDC 5,

Local Parks & Recreation Programs

All of the localities, except for Craig County, in PDC 5 are served by a parks and recreation department. Craig County does have a Youth and Recreation Association that is working hard to fill the needs for recreation there. According to the Commonwealth of Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures, Year Ended June 30, 2005, the PDC 5 departments serve its citizens with an average per capita spending of \$78.81. The per capita spending in 2006 on parks and recreation for each locality in this region was: City of Covington \$160.58, City of Salem \$154.45, Alleghany County \$51.86, Roanoke County \$40.59, Roanoke City \$35.43, and Botetourt County \$29.93. Craig County was not listed in the report. This compares to a statewide per capita spending on parks and recreation of \$60.10, including \$76.51 from cities and \$43.75 from counties.

General parks & recreation recommendations include:

- Localities should appoint a parks and recreation commission to provide citizen leadership with regard to parks and recreation issues and concerns. Commissions have been effective in many localities to enhance park areas and recreation programs. This is most important in localities where no parks and recreation department exists.
- Commitments to the maintenance, management, and development of local parks and recreational systems are necessary. Localities should explore alternative methods of funding, such as set-aside ordinances, fees and charges and public/private partnerships. The establishment of a “friends group,” which could possibly evolve into a “park foundation,” should be considered for the local parks and recreation department. This citizens group could be a source of volunteers, as well as a source for community support and other resources.
- Local parks and recreation departments should initiate a structured volunteer program that recruits, trains and retains volunteers, and recognizes their contributions to parks, programs and the overall quality of life in communities.
- All localities should develop and implement hiking and bicycling plans to connect parks, schools and neighborhoods. Encouraging biking and walking within the community can enhance community health and spirit.
- Parks and programs need to be accessible to special populations, including senior adults and persons with disabilities.
- Consideration by localities of the benefit of a school/park cooperative agreement could enhance use of school and park facilities. School systems, and local parks and recreation departments should cooperate in the design of new or renovated facilities. In order to increase local access, localities should consider cooperative management for the recreational use of private, corporate, state or federally owned lands.
- All public playgrounds, including school and park playgrounds, should meet or exceed the guidelines established by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission and published in the USCPSC

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Handbook for Public Playground Safety. All equipment should have a cushioned surface under and around it.

- Localities should explore turning abandoned landfills into new and needed parks. From Virginia Beach to New York City to Berkeley California, localities have found they can add parkland, while removing community eyesores. http://ga0.org/ct/x7LKtNM1_RZ8/landfill_to_parks

Specific parks & recreation recommendations include:

59) Development of Greenfield Recreation Park, Botetourt County, for facilities to meet the demands of the county.

60) Establish new parks in the **Town of Buchanan** and the community of **Eagle Rock**.

61) Explore creation of a “**Headwaters of the James**” **park and interpretive center** at the confluence of the Jackson and Cowpasture Rivers in cooperation with local and state agencies.

62) Develop and implement a plan for the **Read Mountain** parkland.

63) Develop **Taylor Property** as a passive park linking other public lands.

64) Develop the **Craig County Youth & Recreation Association property** at Rte. 615 and 614 for active fields, picnicking, playground, and courts.

65) Implement development of facilities at **Mowles Spring Park** in Salem.

66) Consideration should be given to the establishment of a new regional park in the vicinity of **Poor Mountain/ Bent Mountain**, southwest of the Roanoke/Salem area.

67) Continue the development and enhancement of Virginia’s **Explore Park** facilities that complement the Blue Ridge Settlement and associated trails. Develop surplus lands for local greenway initiatives.

68) **Read Mountain** should be planned and managed to promote conservation, provide recreation, and protect critical viewsheds and open space resources.

69) Implement the planned development of recreational opportunities compatible with the protection of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and Roanoke’s water supply the land use plan for restricted use public land surrounding **Carvin’s Cove Reservoir**.

Other Federal & State Lands (Military & colleges/universities)

70) **Catawba State Hospital** in Roanoke County should be assessed to determine its potential for providing recreational opportunities.

Private Sector Recommendations

The private sector plays a significant role in providing recreational opportunities in the commonwealth. Familiarity with the *Landowner Liability Law, Code of Virginia, Chapter 29.1-509* could encourage some landowners to enter into an agreement with a unit of government to provide public access while minimizing their liability. As many localities prepare for substantial increases in residential growth, consideration must be given for the inclusion of mechanisms within the permitting process to encourage or require the preservation of open space and the development of recreational amenities to meet communities’ needs.

Developed campgrounds, resident summer camps for children, golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools, marinas and indoor recreational facilities help meet the needs identified in the 2000 *Virginia Outdoors Survey*. Within the George Washington region, entrepreneurial opportunities exist for the establishment of outfitter services for canoeing and kayaking, boat launches, canoe-in campgrounds, multi-field sports complexes, and swimming pools. Private landowners might consider fee-based hunting, fishing and boating access.

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The following general recommendations are made to improve private sector provisions of outdoor recreation.

- Encourage public outdoor recreation providers to partner with multiple private sector organizations.
- Recreational use agreements and/or easements should be encouraged for private property owners providing public recreation opportunities and to make more private lands available for recreation.
- Efforts should be made by DCR and local parks and recreation departments to make existing and potential private sector providers of outdoor recreation, especially where applicable to trails and greenways development, knowledgeable about the Virginia Landowner Liability Law.
- Local, state and federal outdoor recreation providers should support corporate recognition programs and improve corporate recognition for small business willing to incorporate outdoor recreation needs in an environmentally friendly manner.

Specific private sector recommendations include:

71) The recent sale of Explore Park to a private developer creates a need to determine the loss of recreation and interpretive facilities and natural resources and how partnerships could be developed to protect the resources.

72) Support development of a bed and breakfast preservation initiative to protect scenic and agricultural land and promote small business enterprises.